

Study of Educational Psychologists' Emotional Competence Development

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Abstract

The article presents the essential characteristics of the concept “emotional competence” as a component of the educational psychologist’s professional competence. The article explains the importance of the emotional abilities (empathy, reflection, self-regulation and control feelings and emotions of other people) in the personal structure of the educational psychologist. Specificity of educational psychologist’s professional activity is that he must confront his professional challenges and manage his emotional state. The foreign analogue of the concept “emotional competence” is “emotional intelligence”. Based on the analysis of conjugate concepts of “emotional ability”, “emotional intelligence” there is provided a definition of “emotional competence”. The article reveals various scientific approaches to this concept, highlighting their structural components. As part of emotional competence there are four basic components and their functions: self-regulation (impulse control and management of emotions, expression of emotions, blocking negative emotional states); regulation of relationships (social skills, ability to build relationships with others); reflection (self-awareness, rational understanding of emotions, and identifying one’s own motivation); empathy (emotional and cognitive decentering). The article presents the results of ascertaining and controlling stages of research in experimental and control groups. The qualitative interpretation of the results obtained with the use of statistical methods of data processing is given.

Keywords: competence, ability, professional competence, emotional competence, self-regulation, the regulation of relations, reflection, empathy, educational psychologist, students, pedagogical experiment

1. Introduction

1.1 Actualizing the Problem

In modern education system there are undergoing global changes in information, communication, professional and other areas. Value orientations, goals, pedagogical tools are being changed. There is a correction of content, methodological and technological aspects of education. Besides, there are changing requirements for specialists of pedagogical specialties, in particular educational psychologists. A modern educational psychologist must be prepared for solving theoretical and practical professional problems, be able to create, apply and adjust the system of professional activity (Valeeva & Karimova, 2014; Levina et al., 2015). Because of the complexity and responsibility of the professional work of educational psychologist there are increasing demands on them as professionals. Professional activity of an educational psychologist is associated with the knowledge of purely individual personality characteristics of people, their deep inner feelings and states. In the process of educational psychologists activity it is important to maintain the trust of the people, to understand and accept the mood and behavior of another person, to be able to build own interaction with the person considering his own mood, as well as behavioral characteristics, perception of the world.

1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem

A psychologist as a person and a professional develops in the process of education and socialization (Mokeyeva, Zakirova, & Masalimova, 2015). Meanwhile, the establishment of vocational training does not fully take into account the specifics of the educational psychologist’s labor. He must confront professional challenges, must manifest perceptual abilities to understand the individuality and uniqueness of another person, must show

empathy towards him, must reflect, manage his own emotional state and determine the characteristics of impact. Moreover, one of the biggest challenges in psycho-pedagogical activity is its high emotional intensity that can lead to psychological and emotional overload, emotional stress, emotional burnout, etc. Consequently, the greatest significance in the structure of the educational psychologist personality has emotional abilities. This phenomenon can be attributed to emotional abilities such as emotional intelligence. It includes the ability for recognition, understanding and managing emotions. For modern people problem of competence in understanding and expression of emotions is quite acute, as in society the cult of rational attitude to life is artificially propagated. At the end of the 20th century researchers came to realize that people differ not only by the occurrences of their emotions, but also how they can deal with them. So the science concepts “emotional intelligence” and “emotional competence” appeared.

One of the fundamental purposes of training in high school is the formation of the graduates’ professional competence. Professional competence includes a system of knowledge and skills enabling a graduate solve problems in the field of professional activity, as well as personality traits, giving him the opportunity to successfully solve a certain class of professional tasks. Emotional competence is one of the components of a psychologist’s professional competence. Formation of emotional competence of future educational psychologists is a very significant problem. It is important for future specialists to learn how to engage in dialogue with the client, to have high self-esteem, effective emotional, volitional and communication skills. In addition, there must be teamwork skills and autonomy in decision-making. Besides, a high level of emotional intelligence in psychologist working in an educational institution is a real factor in maintaining mental health. That’s why it is necessary to organize a systematic work on the formation of this competence while studying at the university. Studies show that 2/3 of the core competencies required for an effective leader belong to the category of emotional competence. According to M. Reynolds (2003) “the development of emotional competence makes people more professional and a professional more humane.”

1.3 Status of a Problem

Interaction of emotional and cognitive functioning of the psyche is seen in studies of Sarason, Johnson and Siegal (1978), Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger and Weiss (1989). The essence of emotional intelligence and its structural components are disclosed in the work of Bar-On (1997), Goleman (1995), Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2002). The concept of emotional intelligence is considered by Russia scientists Andreeva (2006), Garskova (1999), Lyusin (2006), Manoilova (2004), Chebotar (1999), Yakovleva (1997).

The issue of specialists’ of different profiles competency formation is the study subject of modern Russian researchers as Vardanyan (1999), Basova (2004), Zimnyaya (2006), Baydenko (2004), Zeer (2003), Khutorskoy (2003).

The phenomenon of emotional competence is more studied in Western than Russian psychological science, but in general, the study of this phenomenon is under-represented in the theoretical and practical work.

In the Russian pedagogical and psychological literature on the formation of the individual components of emotional competence there are different researches of Kraynova (2010), Mavlyanova (2011), Pavlyuchenkova (2008), Rozhok (2012) and Yusupova (2006). However, despite the wide range of researches on the problems of emotional competence, questions of future educational psychologists’ emotional competence formation have not found an adequate study yet.

1.4 Emotional Competence

The most important in the structure of educational psychologists’ vocational personality traits are emotional abilities (empathy, reflection, self-regulation and management of feelings and emotions of other people). Foreign analogue of the concept “emotional abilities” is “emotional intelligence”. It was first introduced in 1990 by the American psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990) to refer to a particular set of mental properties, such as the ability to understand one’s feelings, empathy, the ability to regulate own emotions. In his studies of emotional intelligence Goulmen (1995) showed that success in life is determined by such characteristics of person as his ability to self-knowledge and emotional self-regulation; the ability to express his feelings, to understand and finely react to the subtle state of others. Bar-on (2006) understands emotional intelligence as emotional, personal and social skills that have an impact on the overall ability of anyone to effectively manage with the demands and pressures of the environment.

Since emotional intelligence, as well as competence is interpreted through the concept of ability we considered possible to talk about a special psychic organization of the individual—emotional competence which is part of the emotional part of the personal component of educational psychologist’s professional

competence.

Thus, we consider the emotional competence as a group of abilities to self-regulation and regulation of interpersonal relationships by understanding one's own emotions and the emotions of others. In general, when determining synthetically the concepts of ability in the emotional sphere they all revolve around two priority basic phenomenon—it is the understanding and control (regulation). Yusupova (2006) identifies two significant vectors for the study of emotional competence: cognitive (understanding) and behavioral (control). Each area has two vectors: the inner sector—direction to oneself and the external one—direction to others. Thus, cognitive vector is directed on the one hand to self-understanding, referred to as the phenomenon of reflection, on the other hand the focus is directed to the emotional and cognitive decentering of one's own "I", known as the phenomenon of empathy.

Adaptive behavioral responses implement self-regulation of behavior (behavioral vector directed to the regulation of relations with others (behavioral vector directed to interact with others).

Thus, the composition of emotional intelligence has four basic components and their functions:

- Self-regulation—impulse control and management of emotions, expression of emotions, blocking negative emotional states,
- Regulation of relationships—social skills, the ability to build relationships with others;
- Reflexion—self-awareness, rational understanding of emotions, identification of one's own motives;
- Empathy—emotional and cognitive decentering.

Pairwise combination of these components form six functional blocks of emotional competence, the last four of them in the instrumental value are a functional mechanism of successful adaptation of person in a society: the emotional-control unit; self-reflection unit in the interpersonal impact; behavioral unit; cognitive unit; intrapersonal and interpersonal block units.

Thus, the construct of emotional competence consists of four basic components—self-regulation, regulation of mutual relations, reflection and empathy grouping into four functional units-behavioral, cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The Tasks of the Research

The following tasks were set in the study: 1) to clarify the structure and content characteristics of the concept "emotional competence"; 2) to choose the appropriate methods of diagnosing the level of students' emotional competence development, 3) to identify the level of the university students' emotional competence development.

2.2 Theoretical and Empirical Methods

To test the hypothesis there has been used a complex variety of methods, complementing each other:

- Theoretical—analysis of the pedagogical and psychological literature; study and generalization of innovative pedagogical experience, analysis, synthesis;
- Empirical—participant observation, ascertaining pedagogical experiment, questionnaires, tests, as well as methods of mathematical statistics.

2.3 The Trial Infrastructure and Stages of the Research

The trial infrastructure for the study was provided by the Kazan Institute of Eastern Economics and Law Academy of Humanities. The study was conducted in two stages since 2013 till 2014.

At the first stage (2013) there was analyzed the psychological and pedagogical literature on the study, the main approaches to the definition "emotional competence" were identified, and its main components were highlighted. At this stage there were also selected diagnostic methods for detecting the level of all the components of students' emotional competence development.

At the second stage (2014) ascertaining pedagogical experiment on the development of students' emotional competence was conducted.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate the effectiveness of vocational and motivational training of the students on developing their emotional competence, there were used the following criteria:

- *Cognitive* (awareness of one's feelings and emotions, awareness of feelings and emotions of others);

- *Personal* (high level of empathy, high level of communicative orientations harmony);
- *Behavioral* (control one's feelings and emotions, managing feelings and emotions of others; a high level of communicative control; no interference in establishing emotional contacts).

2.5 Experimental Procedure and Its Description

Diagnosis of emotional competence was carried out in the process of ascertaining stage of the experiment. It helped to determine its *three levels of development* of students: high, medium and low.

Methods selected were based on the criteria of formation of students' emotional competence—future educational psychologists: cognitive, personality, behavior.

Cognitive component was studied by Manoilova (2004) technique “Diagnosis of emotional intelligence”. This technique is a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions and statements. The subject is asked to assess the extent of his agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale. The questionnaire contains 4 scales (awareness of one's feelings and emotions, control of the feelings and emotions, awareness of feelings and emotions of others, managing feelings and emotions of others) and the integral index of the general level of emotional intelligence. Integrated indicator of emotional intelligence is determined by summing the scores on all scales of the questionnaire.

The personal component was diagnosed by following procedures: Diagnostic method of empathic abilities level (Boyko, 2004), Diagnostic method of motivational orientations in interpersonal communication (Ladanov & Urazaeva, 1989). As one of the most important components of emotional competence is considered empathy, we used the diagnostic method of empathic abilities level after Boyko (2004) with the aim of a better understanding of this quality. This technique is a questionnaire consisting of 36 statements, by which the subjects express their agreement or disagreement on this or that question. Methodology of diagnosis of motivational orientations in interpersonal communication (Ladanov & Urazaeva, 1989) aimed on identifying the main communicative orientations and their harmony in the process of formal communication.

Interpretive part includes six scales: a rational channel of empathy, emotional channel of empathy, intuitive channel of empathy, attitudes promoting empathy, the penetrating power of empathy, identification.

Behavioral component is represented by the following tests: Diagnostic Method of interference in establishing emotional contacts (Boyko, 2014); Diagnostic Method of Emotional Intelligence (MEI) (Manoilova, 2004); Diagnosis of communicative control by M. Schneider (Fetiskin et al., 2005).

To investigate the factors impeding favorable emotional communication we used the method of diagnosis of interference in establishing emotional contacts after Boyko (2004). The technique is a questionnaire of 25 statements. The respondents were asked to read the judgment and to answer “yes” or “no.”

In the course of processing the results we counted the number of responses that corresponded the key for each of the 5 scales laid down: the inability to control emotions and dose them, improper display of emotions, inflexibility, poor and expressionless of emotions, dominance of negative emotions, unwillingness to associate with people on an emotional basis. Scaled scores can range from 0 to 5 points. At the same time expressed are those indicators which estimates are more than 3 points.

Integrated indicator of interference in establishing emotional contacts were determined by summing up bar graph ratings. If the test scored from 0 to 2 points, it is assumed that he or she was insincere, or had difficulty in seeing himself. With 5 points - the emotions usually do not interfere to communicate with a partner; at 6-8 points—there are some emotional problems in everyday life; at 9-12 points—the emotions complicate cooperation with partners. An amount of 13 points or more suggests the presence of overt interference in establishing contacts with people, exposure to disruptive reactions or conditions.

The method of diagnosis of communicative control (M. Schneider) is designed to study the level of communicative control. According to M. Schneider people with high communicative control constantly look after themselves, they are well aware of where and how to behave. They manage their emotional displays. However, they are facing significant challenges in the spontaneity of expression; they do not like unpredictable situations. People with low communicative control are direct and open, but may be perceived by others as overly intrusive and straight.

The respondents had to read carefully 10 statements which reflected reactions to certain situations of communication. Each of them had to be evaluated as true (T) or false (F) in relation to themselves, putting next to each item corresponding letter. 1 point allocated to the answer “F” to questions 1, 5, 7, and for the answer “T” on all other issues. Then we calculated the amount of points. Stacked score was interpreted according to the

following criteria:

0-3 points—low communicative control; high impulsivity in communication, openness, looseness, behavior is not subject to change depending on the situation of communication and does not always correlate with the behavior of other people.

4-6 points—the average communicative control; the subject communicates directly, sincerely treats others but is kept in emotional displays for he relates his reaction to the behavior of people around him.

7-10 points—high communication control; the subject constantly monitors himself and controls the expression of his emotions.

In order to identify features of students' emotional competence the measurement results due all methods were subjected to statistical procedures and correlation analysis.

To determine the significance of differences between average values of experimental and control groups there was used t - Student test.

Since the application of the Pearson correlation coefficient, is incorrect if different distribution data set from the normal, we tested the normal distribution by calculating the parameters of the arithmetic mean, mode, median, dissymmetry and kurtosis.

As a result, by comparison of measures of central tendency we found that all distributions resulting from empirical research were different from normal. In this regard there was held normalization procedure of baseline and transferring raw scores into T-scores scale of McCall.

In order to identify the correlation connections of indicators there was used Pearson's linear correlation coefficient. The presence of significant correlations was tested by using Student's t-test at a confidence level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and $\alpha = 0.1$.

3. Results

The following results were obtained in studying emotional intelligence in both groups by the method of Manoilova (Figure 1 & 2).

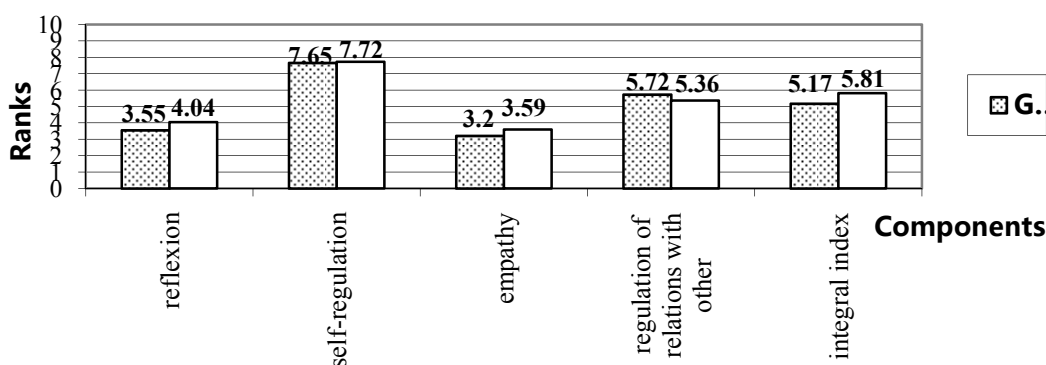


Figure 1. Average values of the components of emotional intelligence in groups on the ascertaining stage

The diagram demonstrates the two groups proved the least developed cognitive unit of emotional intelligence: reflection (3.55, 4.04, Gr.1 and Gr.2) and empathy (3.2 and 3.59, respectively). This indicates a low ability to understand the role of one's own feelings in communication; a lack of awareness about the emotional and psychological qualities that characterize the state of the individual; one's own role in professional activities; unexpressed need for self-knowledge; low level of development of interpersonal liking, reflection and understanding of the thoughts and feelings of another person, preventing the creation of an image of the communication partner that includes all levels of mental reflection. Owing to insufficient capacity for forecasting

it is difficult to attribute the emotional color to situation, tuning in experiencing of a partner in the interaction.

Average level of development there reached the indicator “regulation of relations with others” (5.72 and 5.36, respectively) that indicated the lack of development of the ability to anticipate developments and external expression (posture, movement) of his psychological state to influence the communication partner. There were also some difficulties in the ability to achieve good psychological climate in the team and the implementation of individualized set of humanistic influences aimed on preventing adverse conditions of another person.

The most developed component of students’ emotional intelligence was self-regulation (Gr.1 - 7.65 and 7.72-Gr.2), allowing them to manage their emotions and feelings and using them to achieve the goal. This can be explained by the presence of a training program for educational psychologists training sessions within such disciplines as “Methods of active social and psychological training”, “Psychological and pedagogical workshop”, etc. They allow to improve the behavioral aspect without significant reliance on the awareness of their own emotions and the emotions of others humans.

Group average level of emotional intelligence in Gr.1 and Gr.2 was 5.17 and 5.81 points on a 10 point scale, which corresponds to the average level of development of this quality.

Thus the level of students’ emotional intelligence is characterized by vivid manifestation of the development of certain aspects of emotional intelligence and low levels of other components. There prevails intrapersonal direction (reflection + self-regulation) that may indicate immaturity of professional position and focus on the other person.

Using diagnostic techniques of empathic abilities level after V.V. Boyko we received the following empirical data (Fig.2).

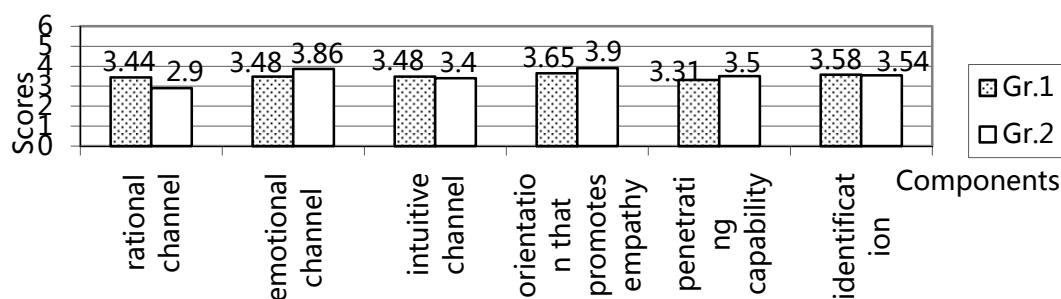


Figure 2. Average values of the components of empathic abilities in groups on the ascertaining stage

The most pronounced components of empathic abilities in groups were setup to facilitate empathy (3.65-Gr.1 and 2.9-Gr.2), and identification (3.58 and 3.54 respectively). This may indicate that in the students educational psychologists there dominated setting to facilitate interaction, extending the range of emotional responsiveness and empathic perception; sufficiently developed the ability to understand another on the basis of empathy, setting oneself in the place of the partner.

As a result of studies to establish emotional disturbances of contacts as described in the method of Boyko V.V. in both groups there were obtained the following results (Figure 3).

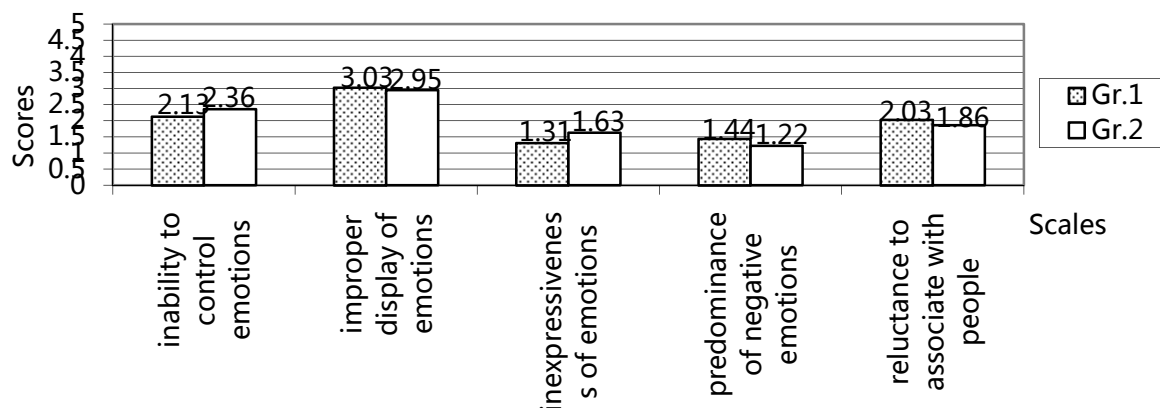


Figure 3. Average indicators of interference in establishing emotional contacts on the scales in student groups at the ascertaining stage

Among the main obstacles in establishing emotional contacts were inappropriate displays of emotion (3.03 and 2.95 points), the inability to manage emotions, their dosing (2.13 and 2.36) and unwillingness to associate with people on an emotional basis (2.03 and 1.86 points)—score is out of 5 possible points.

As a result of correlation analysis there were obtained reliable and moderate indicators to severe density between the following parameters: emotional intelligence and emotional disturbances in establishing contacts (-0.52); reflection and self-regulation (0.73); empathy and identification (0.5); regulation of relationships with others and identification (0.54).

Diagnosis of motivational orientations in interpersonal communication by the method of I. D. Ladanov and V. A. Urazaeva showed that students in both groups at the average level demonstrated focus on the adoption of a communication partner (19.03 and 21.34 points) and orientation to reach a compromise (23.46 and 20.89) that was reflected in one's interest to spend time in a conversation with a partner, to show respect, interest, attention to the interlocutor and the desire to please his companion. However, students did not adequately perceive and understand the communication partner. In both groups the indicator was low (19.57 and 18.76, respectively) and this indicated that it was impossible for students to understand the situation and the behavior of others, lack of desire to communicate better and to avoid conflicts (Figure 4).

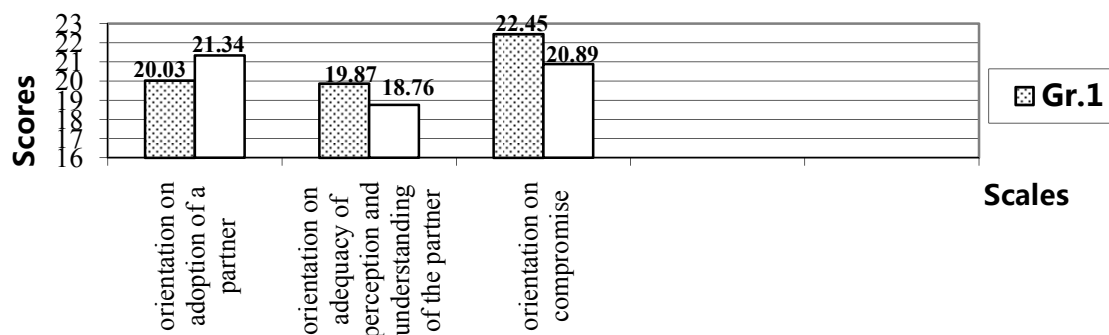


Figure 4. Average indicators of the motivational orientations in interpersonal communication on the scales in the groups on the ascertaining stage

Overall of harmonic communication orientations were represented in both groups at low levels (28.68 and 29.01 respectively).

The final stage of the diagnostic procedure was to investigate the severity of each component of emotional intelligence and its integrative index. Processing of the results we carried out according to established procedures which we discussed above. There were obtained the following results (Table 2).

Table 1. Average values for the components of emotional competence in a sample

Diagnosed indicators	Group 1 (average values)	Group 2 (average values)
Cognitive component	2.8	3.1
The personal component	4.5	4.3
Behavioral component	4.7	4.6
Emotional competence (integral index)	10.3	10.2

The data show that the strongest is the link between reflection and self-regulation (0.73) and they form a unit of intrapersonal emotional competence of educational psychologists. This indicates a certain internal structure and coherence between the individual indicators, but the link between empathy and regulation of relationships with others (they form interpersonal unit) is much less strong (0.44). No relation was found between the reflection and empathy, self-regulation and the regulation of relations with other people, which form the cognitive and behavioral blocks, respectively. It also confirms the low level of development of emotional competence of students of educational psychologists, unexpressed individual components and the lack of coherence between indicators.

We should also note the presence of a strong negative link between emotional intelligence and emotional disturbances in establishing contacts (-0.52), and this leads to lowering of the disturbance level in establishing emotional contact with at increasing the level of development of emotional competence.

The link between reflection and expressionless emotions, self-regulation and expressionless, the regulation of relations with others and identification, empathy and identification can be called a natural.

Summarizing the analysis of empirical data at the ascertaining phase of the study of educational psychologists' emotional competence we can conclude that the students' emotional competence is at the average level; the most prominent were behavioral and intrapersonal blocks of emotional competence that indicates some internal inconsistencies between its constituent components, immaturity of the construct as a whole and all this requires forming work at this direction.

4. Discussions

In summary, it can be noted that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence have strong ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others, the management of their own emotional sphere which makes a higher adaptability and efficiency in communication.

Emotional competence as a component of professional competence is a set of emotional and social skills, such as the ability to understand own emotions and the emotions of others, to manage the emotional sphere. All structural components of emotional competence are interrelated and their interdependence promotes effective interpersonal interaction.

5. Conclusion

The study showed that the average group level of emotional competence in the groups studied corresponded to the average. The least developed component was the cognitive block of emotional competence of intrapersonal orientation. The most developed component of emotional intelligence was self-regulation. The students of both groups are characterized by a tendency to vivid expression of such components of empathic abilities as setting contributing to empathy and identification. The main obstacle in establishing emotional contacts were inappropriate displays of emotion, inability to manage emotions, to dose them and their reluctance to associate with people on an emotional basis. These results allow to conclude that there is a necessity for corrective purposeful activity on formation of emotional competence of students - future psychologists of education. This activity is to be aimed on achieving the following objectives:

1) Armament of students—future educational psychologists—with system of concepts and ideas about emotions

and their role in human life, about the emotional competence and its place in the professional competence of the educational psychologist.

- 2) Creation of conditions for the development of emotional expression and understanding of the other person abilities.
- 3) Formation of the desire for self-knowledge and self-development.
- 4) Development of the ability to analyze one's own emotional state.
- 5) Formation of self-regulation skills.
- 6) Improving the skills of empathy.
- 7) Formation of regulation skills of relationships with other people.
- 8) Integration of the acquired knowledge and practical training activities.
- 9) Formation of professional motivation, creating a motivational basis of emotional competence.

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